



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

March 8, 2004

News Release

ICE CONDUCTS WORKSITE ENFORCEMENT OPERATION AT GREENSBORO AIRPORT

27 Illegal Aliens Aircraft Workers Arrested

GREENSBORO, N.C. – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents arrested 27 illegal aliens in an investigation into the use of counterfeit documents while working as aircraft mechanics, and in other aviation-related jobs, at the Piedmont/Triad International Airport.

The illegal aliens arrested today all worked for contract labor companies who supply workers to TIMCO, a company that performs contract maintenance on passenger and cargo aircraft. Federal officials said TIMCO was not a target and is fully cooperating in the ongoing investigation, called "Operation Fly By."

"Protecting the security and safety of the airline industry and its passengers is a crucial part of ICE's continuing enforcement strategy," said ICE Greensboro Resident Agent-in-Charge Thomas O'Connell. "When an individual uses fraudulent documents, it hides their true identity and history. As the 9/11 Commission pointed out, the United States cannot risk having 'unknown' people working in or near its critical infrastructure."

Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, ICE and the Department of Homeland Security have placed a priority on protecting the nation's infrastructure. There is no reason to believe at this time that any of the individuals arrested today were involved in or planning any terrorist activity.

The 27 arrested by ICE today were charged with administrative violations of immigration law and will be placed in deportation proceedings. Their home countries include Sudan, Chile, Peru, Zimbabwe, the Philippines, Venezuela, Mexico and Laos.

- more -

Other agencies that assisted ICE in today's operation and the ongoing investigation include the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of North Carolina, Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Department of Transportation Office of the Inspector General, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Transportation Security Administration and the Piedmont/Triad International Airport Police.

Today's worksite enforcement action is part of ICE's Operation Tarmac, an ongoing initiative that targets employers and unauthorized workers who have access to sensitive areas at airports. To date, ICE agents have conducted investigations at 196 airports nationwide and audited more than 5,800 businesses as part of this operation. As a result, we've identified over 5,800 unauthorized airport workers, arrested more than 1,000 unauthorized alien workers, and obtained 775 criminal indictments.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.